



STATE OF MICHIGAN

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DOUGLAS E. HOWARD, Director

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Editor
Ann Arbor News
340 E. Huron
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104

Dear Editor:

Information I provided during testimony to a state legislative committee was misrepresented in an April 23 editorial in the Ann Arbor News. The editorial, called "Bright Side," said: "It's fair to ask whether there isn't a better way to screen out more of the adults who neglected or abused 27,000 children in Michigan's foster care system this past year. That figure...is the number of complaints confirmed. The total number of complaints exceeded 100,000." This statement is not correct and casts a shadow on foster care providers in Michigan.

Child Protective Services (CPS, a unit of the Family Independence Agency) reported nearly 27,000 children were abused or neglected in Michigan during Fiscal Year 2000, but these children are not all in the foster care system. At any given time, about 10,500 children in Michigan reside with foster families. Another 5,700 reside with other relatives.

Most children in homes with CPS intervention remain home with their parents, who received or continue to receive appropriate CPS or community-based services. The goal of CPS is to protect children, but in most cases that does not mean removing children from their homes. Every effort is made through state and local service providers to help families mend the rift that brought CPS into their lives in the first place.

Foster parents are almost never the perpetrators of abuse and neglect. CPS records indicate about 19,000 persons committed abuse and neglect in Michigan in FY 2000. Of those, only 61 were foster parents. Almost 15,000 were parents in the home and another 1,855 were parents out of the home.

In Michigan, the record shows foster parents do everything in their power to help children recover when removed—temporarily or permanently—from fractured families. To represent foster families as perpetrators of child abuse is wrong and casts a dark shadow over thousands of families who step forward each year to help children in distress. Your readers need to know and understand this about foster parents in Michigan.

Sincerely,

Douglas E. Howard



JOHN ENGLER, Governor